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Canada Post announces 1996 stamp program

Charles Verge

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Column

The subjects for the 1996 stamp program have been announced by Canada Post. Scheduled are 14 commemorative sets and single stamps, one definitive and a new series of postal stationery.

The lone definitive is an addition to the Canadian architecture high values. Will the Victoria Public Library's be the first \$10 stamp? It's a value whose time has come. If not, then the \$5 Bonsecours Market, issued May 28, 1990, is due for replacement to the smaller format introduced in 1994 for the \$1 and \$2 architecture definitives.

Again this year we should be treated to a variety of formats: booklets (Canada Post calls them stamp packs), souvenir sheets and miniature sheets.

The first issue of the year, a series on four Canadian birds scheduled for Jan. 9, comes in a diamond-shaped miniature sheet of 12. The four birds in this series are: Newfoundland's provincial bird, the Atlantic puffin; Canada's largest woodpecker, the insect eating pileated woodpecker; the ruby-throated hummingbird, the only one of its species found east of Alberta; and Canada's smallest falcon, the American kestrel.

Canada Post will make available to collectors the full uncut press sheet of five miniature sheets. Depending on how it was printed (a strip of five sheets seems likely) collecting possibilities of the severed stamps are multiplied.

This is reminiscent of the hugely popular press sheets the United States Postal Service made available when it issued the Marilyn Monroe stamp last June. A limited edition of 1,000 numbered copies of the birds press sheets will be hand-signed by the designer and the artist.

Two of the birds, the puffin and the woodpecker, will also grace pre-stamped stationery. On the same day, the harlequin duck will spread its wings on the 90-cent aerogramme. The other two birds will appear on stationery in July.

Some time in February or perhaps early March, a series on high-tech industries will appear. It will likely be in a booklet format and could be the Prestige booklet of the year as it is conducive to sponsorship, which is a marketing technique once espoused by Canada Post that has not been popular in the last few years.

Canada Post's press release states that "although many issue dates have not been finalized, the issues are listed in rough chronological order." This is an interesting statement since it indicates that some stamps -- the AIDS awareness and Olympic Games commemoratives for example -- will be issued well ahead of the event

they commemorate.

The XIth International Conference on AIDS will be held in Vancouver July 7-12. Canada Post's issuance of a stamp in April or May would promote the meeting.

Atlanta will play host to the XXVIth Olympiad in August. It's also the centennial of the revival by Baron Pierre de Coubertin of the modern Olympic Games.

To commemorate these events, a set of stamps featuring Canadian sporting heroes will be issued. Will they all be Olympians? In any event, Canada Post, which is looking at a June date for this issue, will probably take the opportunity to support Canada Day as well. So should we then expect a booklet of 10 stamps or a souvenir sheet with an athlete per province?

By now, most of you will know that Ralph Mitchener passed away Dec. 20. He had written this column for more than 12 years.

Although his illness was diagnosed only a few months before his death, he had been ill since last spring. He continued writing his column until he entered hospital and the last one was published Oct. 28.

Ralph took great care in composing these columns. He was quite proud that many of his readers were non-philatelists, and he wanted to make his writings responsive to all his constituency.

He will be greatly missed by the philatelic community at home and abroad, and I will miss him, too. He was a great friend and mentor. To his wife, Jackie, and their children, Christine and Hugh, go our heartfelt condolences.

The next column will cover the remainder of the year's issues, including those whose first day of issue is scheduled at CAPEX '96, the World Philatelic Exhibition in Toronto, June 8-16, 1996.

NEXT WEEK: Coins
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